

Rachel Erasmus

Q & A with Naomi Porter

Rachel:

What are some of the challenges you have experienced in being a leader who has become a mother?

Naomi:

Definitely having to let go of control, as a leader and project manager. I am used to calling the shots and organising others, and with pregnancy, birth and motherhood that has been something that I have had limited ability to do.

From the day I found out I was pregnant I have been on someone else's schedule, not to mention how disruptive morning sickness was to every aspect of my life. When it came to the birth, our hoped-for birth plan had to be abandoned and I had an unplanned caesarean with a lengthy recovery period.

But now I have my beautiful little girl who couldn't be more perfect. All of this has forced me to be more relaxed about things that would normally drive me crazy, the messy house, having to do things much more slowly, 8 weeks of having to get chauffeured everywhere as I recovered from surgery, being late to everything because at the last minute the baby needs feeding or changing. I can feel myself becoming much more accepting than I thought I could be. I have also experienced pregnancy anxiety and mum anxiety and mum guilt, all of which Rachel has helped me to navigate in our sessions.

Rachel:

What have you learned / experienced / gained from being supported in this journey of motherhood ?

Naomi:

I have definitely learned ways to keep calm and be more ok when things don't go to plan. Examples have included relaxation techniques and exploring the "what if X happened" scenarios and understanding that even in the case of everything going different to how I want - I will be ok. Visualisation exercises have helped me keep the big picture in mind and ask "what would my best self do in this scenario " or " what would my best self tell me at this time" . These have been incredibly useful in helping me at times when I've been struggling, such as during the birth, which didn't go to our original plan at all, or being away from work at a time of organisational restructure. I have felt out of touch as my main focus has been on my baby and being at home and together. In this period I have had to go out of my comfort zone and meet new people and make new friends at baby groups- to feel less isolated - which doesn't come easy as I am normally quite reserved. I have been able to apply the techniques and remember my coaching outcomes and tell myself "I can do it" and find ways to be ok with the unknown. I am now feeling very positive about where we are and more confident to try new things with baby.

Continued below.....

Rachel Erasmus

Q & A with Naomi Porter

Rachel:

What value do you think this kind of support offers both to employing organisations and the mothers who work within them?

Naomi:

This type of support helps to prepare mothers for the huge changes that are coming or have already happened and how to reconcile them with their old and new identities as they become mothers. It helps them to find ways to be more adaptable and accepting of things they are experiencing at home as well as at work. I think that it is so helpful to have something like this available through work as it feels like they are supporting you not only as an employee but as a person - knowing that you are so much more than the work you produce. It shows understanding that you can be at your best when you are supported and empowered in your motherhood journey, rather than having to separate the two identities when you come back from maternity leave.

Rachel:

What specific qualities have you experienced and appreciated about me (that might be unique)?

Naomi:

Rachel is such a warm, caring and calm influence, it is incredibly rare to find someone who is not only a fantastic coach with oodles of experience and tools to help me explore my motherhood journey, but she has the added benefit of experience in maternity services. Rachel has a detailed understanding of the birthing process from a clinical perspective as well. This has been so helpful at times when I felt overwhelmed by all the different processes and possible outcomes - she was able to answer a lot of my questions and help me explore the possible outcomes using a coaching approach. This was extremely reassuring especially on the run up to the birth and when exploring my feelings after we had a traumatic and difficult birthing experience so I could bring myself more to the present challenges of new motherhood.